

Korea's Modernization in Light of Modernization Theory: Nepotism Appeared in Power-Related Corruption and Social Relationship

By

KIM, Ji Young

THESIS

Submitted to

KDI School of Public Policy and Management

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

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Abstract

This research points out the limitation of “Early Modernization Theory” by studying Korea’s “Nepotism”, an East-Asia’s traditional community culture based on school tie, regional tie and blood tie. This research looks into how nepotism has continued even after modernization, examining the limitation of early modernization theory which argues that economic development leads to overall change of the society such as social value, culture and level of people’s awareness. Korea has achieved rapid economic growth in half a century, experiencing huge societal transformation. However, nepotism is still clearly found in Korean social relationships and power-related corruptions. Participation rate for nepotism network such as alumni gathering of school or native places is the highest, recording around 31% in two researches conducted in 2006 and 2015. In addition, nepotism connection is abused in business world, which is shown in power-related corruption examples such as Nara Banking Corporation’s illegal lobby incident and Presidential Election bribery incident in 2002. Korea’s nepotism has been solidified during the historical hardship periods such as Japanese colonization, Korean War, and government-led rapid economic development, as public institutions have not been trustworthy. It is supported by the fact that Korean social capital is “narrow-and-thick”, centered on nepotism relationships, while the confidence in major social organizations is at a low level. This research concludes that early modernization theory which assumes exclusive relationships between “traditionality” and “modernity” and suggests economic and technological development driven by industrialization leads to modernization of overall society does not fully explain Korea’s modernization.

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1. Introduction

A. Research Background

South Korea has achieved rapid economic development after Korean War in the 1950s. Between 1953 and 2017, GDP per capita was 440 times increased. Also, life expectancy increased from below 50 years to over 80 years (GKEDC, 2019a). A country that used to depend on foreign aid is now an aid donor country that has achieved both economic development and democratization (GKEDC, 2019a). Its rapid industrialization in half a century is the history of catch-up and innovation, which compressed 200 years of Western society's industrialization (GKEDC, 2019b).

However, many kinds of socio-economic problems are found in Korean society such as the gap between the rich and poor, social conflicts, low social capital, etc. Particularly, low social capital indicates that people do not trust in their country as well as affiliated community, which impedes sustainable economic development. Korean social capital is characterized as “narrow and thick” type, which indicates that Korean have high confidence in their family, relatives, school alumni and other close relationships which share the same background, whereas they rarely trust in strangers, foreigner, or other different group of people. For this reason, Korean society is regarded as it is under the influence of “familism” as Southern Italia which was studied by Putnam.

This research will look into “nepotism” which stems from “familism” (Science of Public Administration Dictionary, 2009). This research will study how nepotism was

formulated and has been continued, and how it is found in social relationships and power-related corruption. It will be investigated that what kinds of networks are the most notable in Korean society, and how nepotism network is found in power-related corruptions. Shedding light on if Korea's traditional culture, "Nepotism", is rampant in the society, this research will prove the limitation of early modernization theory. The early modernization theory suggests that economic development leads to the overall modernization of a society.

Even though nepotism is general phenomenon of a society, this study wants to look into the aspect of Korea's modern history that impeded growth of social capital and instead made people rely on their private network. Korea went through a series of challenges such as the U.S. military regime after Japanese colonization, Korean War, and extensive state intervention in the economy during the rapid economic growth periods. In this situation, Korean did not have a choice but to rely on the traditional networks such as blood tie or regional tie rather than forming desirable civic communities.

The research approaches to explore this topic are the following: *a. analyze survey data of the Korean social relationships and identify which social activities are the most dominant in Korea, b. study Korean corruption cases that serve as representative side-effects of nepotism.*

The results from this study indicate that social and cultural aspects of the society and people's level of awareness may not keep up with the socio-economic development. This stands in comparison to the points made in modernization theory.

B. Research Questions

This research tackles two major questions: *a. Does nepotism still linger in the Korean society? b. Is modernization theory applicable in the Korean society?*

First, this research looks into Korean social relationships and corruption cases, specifically power-related corruption in order to identify whether nepotism is still a dominant factor in Korea. Second, this paper seeks to conclude whether modernization theory is valid in the Korean context.

C. Research Methods

Case studies were utilized as the compass to see whether nepotism is rampant in the Korean society and how power-related corruption takes place by forming elite cartel based on regionalism, school relations, kinship, etc. The research methods are divided into two: *a. analyzing survey data gathered from Korea Development Institute(KDI) and Statistics Korea.* This paper categorizes social activities according to its characteristics; whether the activity was conducted for private interest or for public good, and whether it displayed nepotism tendencies. *b. studying the cause of power-related corruptions by investigating previous research and news articles.* Since nepotism is a cultural factor of corruption, this research will deal with how nepotism triggers power-related corruption.

2. Theoretical Arguments on Modernization Theory and the Definition of Major Concepts

A. Modernization Theory

Modernization theory is a concept that stretches beyond economic and technological development. According to Kaufmann (1997), the modernization theory is defined as:

The assumption of a gradual and directed transformation of all societies which come in contact with the blessings and risks of modern knowledge and technologies, and this in the same direction that has been paved first by the core regions of Europe.

The term “Modernization” is only of recent usage. For a long time, it was termed “industrialization” (Kaufmann, 1997). As the term implies, modernization theory deals with enormous transformation of society, from traditional to modern, which involves the change of global society. In this research, the theory indicates early modernization theory if it is not specifically mentioned.

Historically, modernization shares close bond with the rise of industrialization. Industrialization refers to lifestyles that bring profound changes in economy, society, politics, and culture (Krishan). As this social phenomenon kicks in, people are exposed to various outputs from industrialization and are often inclined to change their social behaviors. Likewise, modernization theory also argues that economic growth leads to overall societal change such as social and cultural aspects and people’s level of awareness.

Another major argument of the modernization theory is that the developing countries will ultimately follow the development path of European countries which achieved modernization earlier than other countries from 18th century. There are two major results that sprung out from the European modernization; economic growth and democracy.

According to Suh (2014), modernization theory asserts that the development process brings about a sort of “conversion” which indicates that every society treads an identical path of industrialization and democratization. Knoebl and Trigillia (2000) mentions that social change towards modernity in different societies will take place in a rather uniform and linear manner. This argument assumes that a traditional society of a developing country is inferior to a modernized society of a developed country, suggesting the current developed country is the blueprint for the developing country. Since early modernization theory asserts that a traditional society is transferred to a modern society through industrialization, early modernization theory argues that “tradition” and “modernity” are two conflicting ideas that cannot co-exist. According to Suh (2014), the modernization theory regards traditionality as stationary and undifferentiated, and the fact that many traditional societies function under reasonable and modernized system is easily neglected.

Early modernization theory was criticized due to its simplicity which does not regard external environment of each society as an important factor to make a difference of development path. For this reason, “late modernization theory” compensates the defect of early modernization theory, recognizing various development paths and alleviating the dichotomous way of thinking about traditionality and modernity. While the theory recognizes that many societies of developing countries have both modern and traditional factors with the difference of the extent, it admits that development paths can be divergent based on the external environment of every society.

B. Elaborating the Major Concepts

i. Nepotism

In this research, Nepotism means discriminatory and exclusive attitude based on regionalism and school ties. There is a similar term in Western society, “clientelism”¹, which means relationship between individuals with unequal economic and social status such as “the boss” and his “subordinate” that entails the reciprocal exchange of goods and services based on a personal link that is generally perceived in terms of moral obligation.² It is similar in that both means relationships built by personal link and pursuing exclusive benefits. It can be disadvantageous throughout the society.

As it is defined, “Clientelism” takes place in the circumstance of “asymmetric power relationships”. However, nepotism does not always happen in that situation. Also, while clientelism is based on reciprocal exchange between the person directly involved, nepotism occurs with the expectation of potential benefits from a third party sharing the same connection. This is the difference between the two concepts.

ii. Familism

Familism is divided into two meanings. In a narrow sense, it means family-centered principle of life that does not recognize the independence of family members, rather regards

¹ Briquet Jean-Louis. Definition of “Clientelism”. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/clientelism>

² Briquet Jean-Louis. Definition of “Clientelism”. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/clientelism>

family as an ideal community. In a broad sense, it includes the tendency to enhance and apply the principle to other kinds of social relationships (Kang, 2007). According to Kwon (2016), the relationships range from kinship to company and even country.

Practically, familism appears as family-centered thought, family egoism. It is dominant that Korean try to find solutions for the social issues based on family-centered thoughts, not demanding for societal solution. For example, many of Korean parents send their children to private tutoring in order for them to enter privileged university, thinking that it is the only thing that guarantees successful life of their children. They do not approach the social safety net issue or demand enough quality jobs as whole civic community.

Nepotism is rooted from familism which, as defined earlier, tends to apply the principle among family members to other kinds of group. For this reason, it works to improve the human relationship within the group. On the other hand, it may hinder the reasonability and fairness of the organization management due to its factional strife.

iii. Social Capital

Social capital refers to all kinds of social assets that make it possible for the member of a society to cooperate among themselves. OECD defines social capital as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among group”.³ The norms include unspoken and largely unquestioned rules as well as

³ OECD. What is social capital?. OECD Insights: Human Capital

tangible regulations. The norms are existing within any kind of group. For example, protecting children from harm is a universal norm of many societies.

Social trust is the core concept of social capital.⁴ In this study, social capital means social trust in other individuals and confidence in social organizations such as government, journal, court, etc.

iv. Corruption

There are two meanings of corruption: *a. All kinds of illegal or unjust behaviors which aim for giving physical or social benefits such as property, social status, and opportunity to very limited group of people (Anti-corruption & Civil Rights Commission, 2006), b. public officials' abuse of power over administration in order to get unfair and irregular benefits.* In this research, corruption is not defined to public officials' abuse of power. It is comprehensive term embracing improper pursuing of benefits by private as well as public sectors.

C. Literature Review

There have been a number of researches that dealt with Korea's modernization process. Studies are mostly against typical arguments of modernization theory. They argue that Korea's modernization went down a different path to that of western counterparts, due to

⁴ Concept of Social Capital. The Korea Economic Daily.

their historical differences.

According to Lee (2006), the perception of “individual”, “society”, and “country” differs between Korea and the Western world. Lee (2006) suggests that understanding of these three concepts was absent to the Korean people. They were first introduced during the timeline between the liberation from the Japanese colonial rule and the establishment of the new democratic government, the Republic of Korea.

The concept of “individual” is viewed in Korea as “a part of a community”. More than personal traits, the circle which the individual was affiliated with defined who the person was. Whereas in the western culture, the “individuals” stood more independent, and the circle which the person was affiliated with bore relatively less significance.

“Society” in Korea, according to above context refers to an interest group around oneself. Western countries underwent symbolic historical events such as the French Revolution and the U.S. Independence that formulated the idea that “society” was an “achievement” rather than something that was given. On the other hand, in Korea at the time, such concept of society did not exist. Heavily influenced by Confucianism, “society” was “part of nature”, an environment that surrounded their existence. The fundamental differences of how individuals viewed society in the two cultures stemmed here. Westerners viewed that the “society” was a tool to meet their individual interest, whereas in Korea “society” was the greater good to make contributions to.

The term “country” also holds different value between societies. In Korea, it is regarded as an extension of a “family”. It was considered a social norm. In this sense, individual was obligated to serve the collective duty. Any form of individuality apart from the

collective good of the country was considered deviant and was not a luxury one could afford. Instead, for Koreans, “country” defined the rights they may exercise and duty they had to bear. On the other hand, the time of enlightenment in the west served as the foundation in which the westerners viewed their “country”. Such views stemmed from the theories of social contract which was the bedrock of “The Declaration of the Rights of Man” during the French revolution and “The Declaration of Independence” in the United States.

Lee (2006) served a reason how Korea’s modernization could be different from Western modernization. Even though Korea’s artificial culture, value system, and even way of thinking seemed like changing drastically during the modernization, the new concepts “individual”, “society”, and “country” were accepted differently among the societies due to their historical and cultural differences.

Meanwhile, Kim (2010) mentioned more clearly the existence of nepotism population in Korean society. Kim (2010) suggests two distinct groups have formed during Korea’s modernization. He divided the two groups into “traditional nepotism population”, a popular characteristic for during hardships to utilize conventional networks such as blood ties for survival, and the new “networking population”, a group of people with tendencies to pursue one’s own identity and benefits by autonomous association beyond the traditional identity group such as school or family. The new networking population appeared after the informatization era from the late 1980s, which signaled the advent of internet and democracy. Kim (2010) concludes that, these two groups in discord constitute the Korean society, and in time may merge into a new and single identity.

It is to be highlighted that Kwon (2017) cautions looking into the Korean case

through western lenses by criticizing the Western-centrism which in most cases regards “Modernization” as “Westernization”. According to Kwon (2017), Many Korean traditional values and principles possessed modern aspects in their system. “Gye(mutually beneficial neighborhood)”, “Imperial examination”, and “Bureaucracy” in Joseon dynasty are the persuasive examples that Kwon (2017) presented. In detail, Gye is characterized as autonomous, equal and common-rule based community. These traits are the foundations of many civic groups’ or communities’ manage principle in modern society. Also, imperial examination was merit-based national examination to select public officials during Koryo and Joseon dynasty. It had been existent from 958 A.C. during the Koryo dynasty. Bureaucracy is also representative manage principle of public and private organizations in modern society.

Moreover, during the period of modernization, while the west underwent the spread of individualism where “rational and independent individuals” were considered ideal, in Korea, remnants of traditional familism still lingers to this day. To add to this argument about the modernization theory, Kwon (2017) explains that Korea’s modernity is instead mixture of diverse form of modernity, mainly historical, colonial, and “American”.

This kind of argument indicating the uniqueness of Korea’s modernization different from Western counterparts has been studied. Hong (2017) also argues that Korea’s modernization is fundamentally different from its Western counterparts. This is due to the absence of individualism as it is a very rare phenomenon in the Korean history. Many characterize this as the “individualization with lack of individualism” or “individualization divided from familism” (Hong, 2017). Hong (2017) also asserts that the constitution of Korea as a modernized nation was granted by alien powers, and the authoritarian regime established

by the military coup pursued modernization 10 years after the establishment of the democratic state. As a result, although Korea had successfully industrialized its economy, it lacked political, economic, and cultural liberty. Modern individualism culture was only existent among elite groups.

As discussed above, there have been many critical researches regarding Korea's modernization. Korea walked a different path from its western pioneers as they had their unique historical backgrounds and inherent factors. Not only that, it is persuasive that the concepts of "individual", "society" and "country" were accepted differently from Western society during the modernization. According to Suh (2014), one of the major characteristics of modernization theory is "abstractness" which mainly becomes the reason to be criticized. The argument of modernization theory that developing countries follow the Western linear development path with "economic development" and "democracy" as its two axes is abstract. For this reason, this research attempts to suggest specific examples of nepotism in the Korean society.

While previous researches try to analyze how Korea's modernization process is distinct from the Western society by looking into its historical backgrounds, this research attempts to examine Korea's nepotism displayed in social relationships and power-related corruptions, which is an evidence that modernization theory does not fully explain Korea's modernization.

3. Nepotism and Korea's Social Capital

A. The Origin of Nepotism

The term “nepotism”, in this paper, specifically deals with “closed and exclusive network” and thus it is desirable to distinguish it from “open and universal network”.

According to Lim (1988), nepotism is a universal characteristic portrayed in mankind to use social relationships as a “beneficial connection”. Yet, the nature of nepotism may differ by regions and cultures. For example, a big difference between Korean and Western society is that Korean nepotism is fueled by regionalism or school ties, whereas in the western nepotism is driven by authority and wealth.

According to encyclopedia of Korean Culture, nepotism is complicated network of traditional social relationship. There have been arguments that Korean nepotism came from an ideology, such as Confucianism, but the modern interpretation is that nepotism is not solely from an ideology but rather was assembled through series of historical experiences. Those exemplary events are: corruption in late Joseon dynasty, Japanese colonization, the Korean war, and rapid industrialization led by the authoritarian government. A common distinction between these events is that they are considered time of socio-economic hardship to general population. Accordingly, they lost trust in their governors and thus turned to private networks to survive.

B. The Reason of Formation and Continuation of Nepotism in the Korean Society

Why is nepotism still existent even after modernization in the Korean society? If

modernization theory is correct, social relationship should extend to broader civil communities beyond exclusive network based on nepotism as Western counterparts have done.

In this chapter, it will be studied where nepotism originated from and how it has been existent after modernization (1950s ~ present). First, there are different arguments regarding the origin of nepotism; whether it stems from Confucianism, which is an East-Asian culture, or not. Some explains that the side effect of nepotism such as corruption originates from Confucianism, because the thought put importance on personal relationships and familism. On the other hand, it is also said that since Confucianism distinguishes “public” and “private” sector in its foundation of philosophy, it is not desirable to see Confucianism as the cause of corruption.

However, in regard to the continuation of nepotism, it has been studied that how nepotism has lasted in contemporary Korean society is related to Korea’s historical backgrounds. According to Jang (2008), there are two different approaches to explain evolution of nepotism: *a. institutionalist approach*, *b. structuralist approach*. Institutional approach argues that nepotism has been evolved as a strategic decision in order to reduce the uncertainty caused from undeveloped public institutions, which means that a country has not been trustworthy to the people as a modern state.

Structuralist approach suggests that the evolution of nepotism can be understood as a survival strategy of individuals who react to structural change of economic environment. Meanwhile, Jang (2008) suggests “historic path dependency” perspective which argues that nepotism has been reproduced going through a series of different historical accidents.

Previous pattern of behaviors continues to subsequent events as people learn from the experience. For example, people's dependence on private network during the bureaucratic authoritarian state in 1960~80s, relies on previous determination in the historical path such as the pattern of behaviors – counting on private network - during the Japanese colonization to be survived.

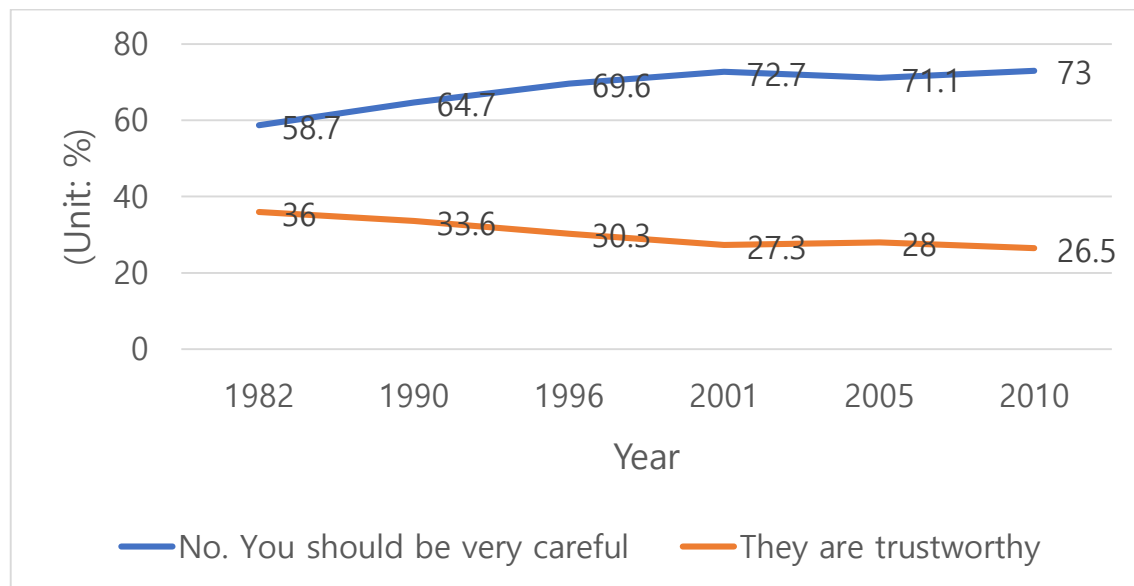
Jang (2008) asserts that Korea's nepotism is attributed to unprepared public institutions and the distrust of authority, as the society at the time have gone through corruption in the late Joseon Royal Court and self-devouring party strife of high-ranking bureaucrats, Japanese colonization and liberation, and the Korean War. The era is characterized as the times of "exploitation". To be more detailed, Jang (2008) explains that Korea's nepotism of those era - narrow and thick social trust - should be understood as a series of people's decision who want to guarantee their safety net and survival under the specific historical environments. At that time, the authority was not trustworthy to the public. That is why Korean people rely on nepotism network whereas they do not trust the social system (Kim, 1996; 102-106).

C. Korea's Social Capital

In order to see general trust level of the Korean society, this research looks into trust level on general population and confidence in representative social organizations. First, regarding trust level on general population, trust level had been decreased gradually from 1982 to 2010 for around 30 years. As of 2010, 73% of the respondents replied that "Generally speaking, people are not trustworthy". This figure is much higher than that as of 1982 which

recorded 58.7%. This indicates that trust level on general population has been declined since 30 years ago.

[Table 1] Response to “Generally speaking, do you think people are trustworthy?”



(Source: World Value Survey)

Meanwhile, in a survey result conducted by Statistics Korea from 2013 to 2015, 4.4% of the respondents said “Generally, people are trustworthy.” while 61.8% of them replied “They are somewhat trustworthy”. Also, 31.5% of them responded “They are not that trustworthy”. In other words, it is found that trust level on general population is not that high in the Korean society.

[Table 2] Response to “Generally speaking, are other people trustworthy?”

(Unit: %, point)

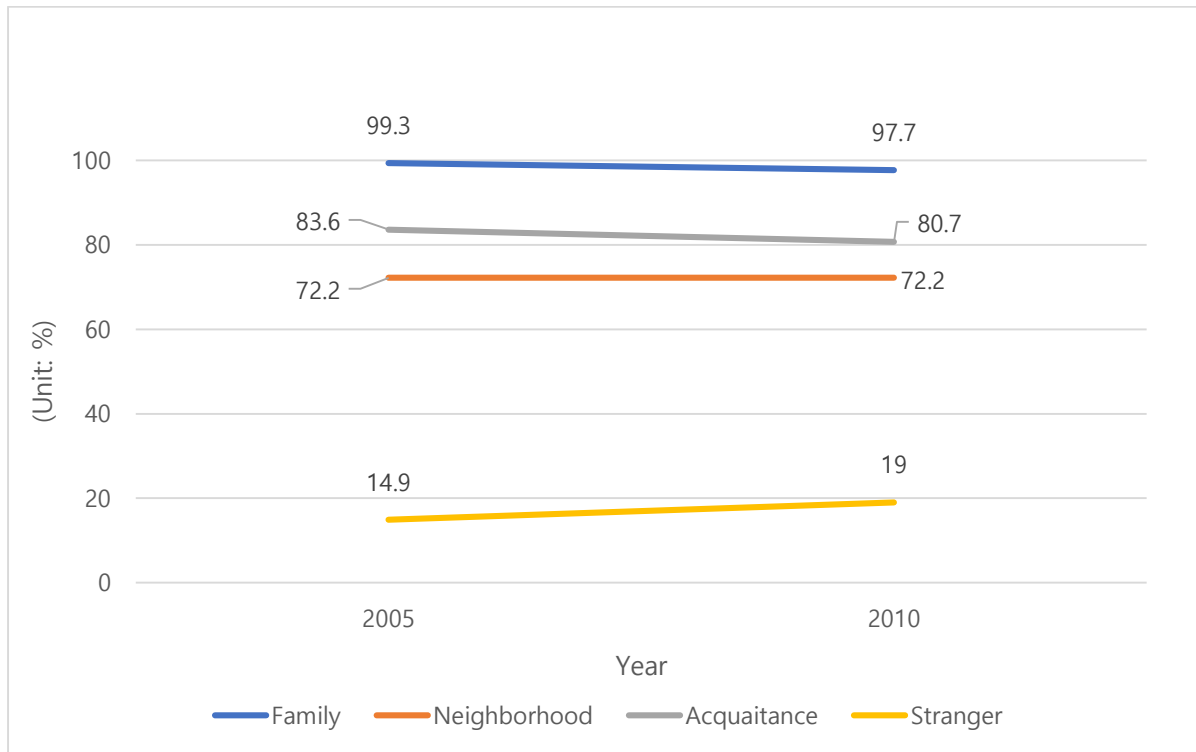
Year	Not trustworthy at all	Not that trustworthy	Somewhat trustworthy	Trustworthy a lot	Average score (in total: 4)
2013	2.5	25.3	66.8	5.4	2.8
2014	2.9	23.5	67.4	6.2	2.8
2015	2.2	31.5	61.8	4.4	2.7

(Source: Statistics Korea)

There is another research to be focused. Trust level of people differs for each group. People replied that they trust in their family as indicated in the survey data. It reached 99.3% as of 2005 and 97.7% as of 2010. This figure is much higher than the trust level on other group of people. Particularly, trust level on strangers is very low, recording 14.9% as of 2005 and 19% as of 2010. There is a significant gap between two indicators; trust level on one’s own family and that on strangers. It indicates that Korean highly trust in their family, whereas they rarely trust strangers whom they do not have any link.

In a country where civil society is matured, people tend to trust others even in the case they are not acquaintance. Meanwhile, the type of Korean trust is “thick-and-narrow”. They trust in their family or acquaintance a lot, but they are defensive about strangers who are seen different in kind.

[Picture 1] Trust Level for Each Group of People (In 2005 and 2010)



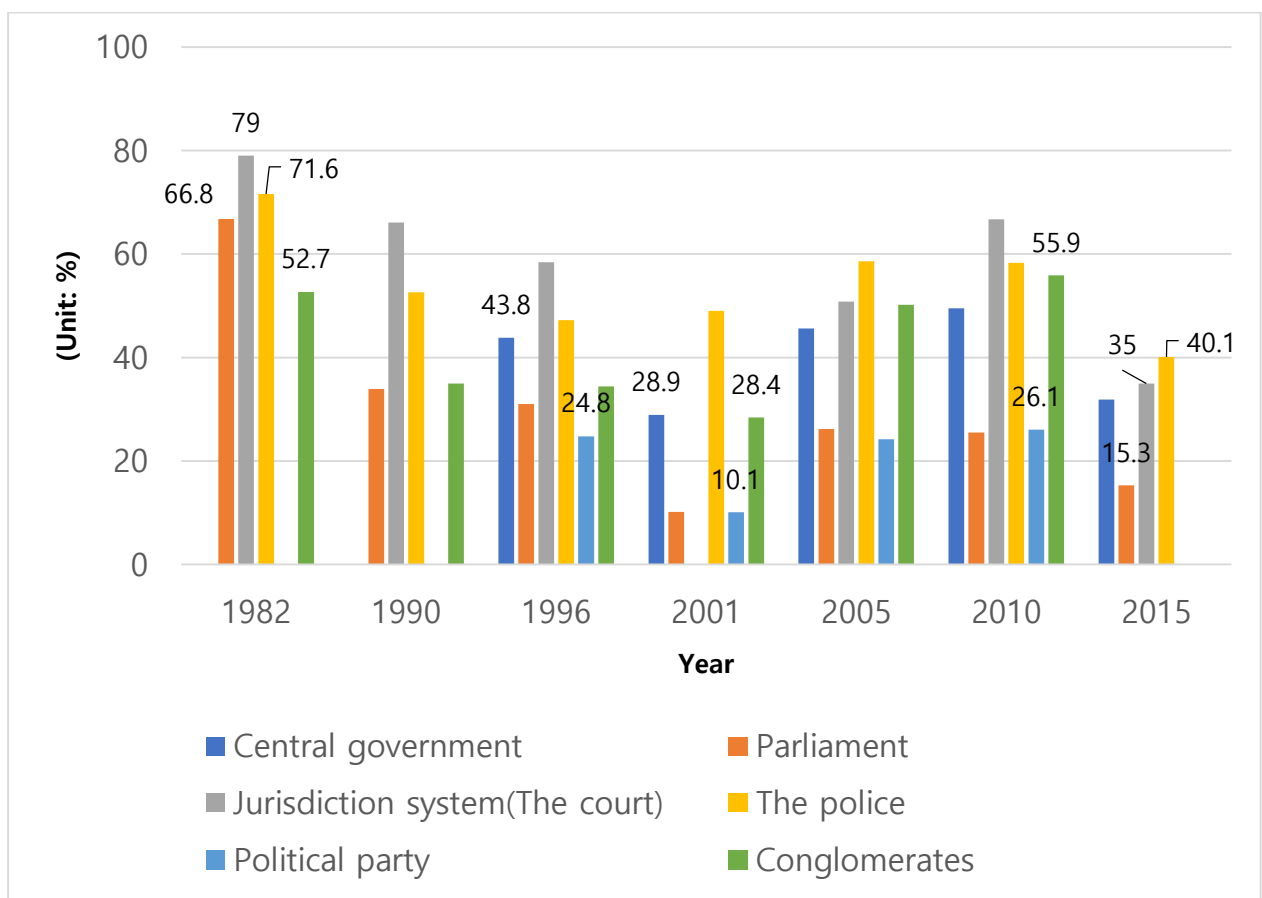
(Source: World Value Survey)

The following is Korean social confidence in major social organizations such as central government, parliament, the court, police, political party and conglomerates. It is the response to the question “Do you trust in each social organization?” The result shows the rate of respondents who replied “Totally agree” or “quite agree” to the question. It indicates that Korean does not have that high level of confidence in major social organizations, especially parliament, central government and political party.

More than 70% of people replied that they have little confidence in parliaments after 1990. Also, people trusted in political party at the lowest level among various public institutions.

Trust level on central government did not exceed more than 50% during the whole survey periods. Trust level on conglomerates had been fallen until 2001, but increased after the period. The result indicates that people do not have confidence in public institutions, especially the high-rank figures such as congressmen, politicians and the judge. This low confidence in high-rank groups is related to the discussion on power-related corruption in the following case study.

[Picture 2] The Rate of Confidence in Each Social Organization



(Source: WVS, Statistics Korea)

4. Korean Social Relationships

A. Two Kinds of Social Networks

Social network can be divided into two categories. 1) Particularistic and exclusive network based on nepotism, 2) Inclusive and universal relationship based on people's thoughts and ideas. According to Park (2000), the Particularistic and exclusive network based on nepotism refers to a certain type of "restriction" or "innate standard" that one must meet such as regional connections or family ties. Vice versa inclusive and universal relationship is a network of which joining qualification is achievable and universal.

The meaning of latter is similar with "network agent" in the research of Kim (2010). Even though the connection based on school tie belongs to "achievable network" which is inclusive and universal relationship, its characteristic is actually "exclusive", distinguishing clearly the members of the group from the others. That is why it is regarded as particularistic and closed network.

There are some examples of nepotism. As discussed earlier, nepotism is a universal phenomenon that is found in other cultural area as well as East-Asia influenced by the Confucian culture. However, East-Asian countries are unique in that nepotism based on school tie, blood tie, and regionalism is rampant in the societies. For example, according to Han (2004), Japan, China and Korea have very strong nepotism based on blood ties in the corporation networks. Looking into the difference among each country, it is studied that Korea is relatively highly affected by "school tie" and "regionalism", while another strong connection in Japan is "company tie" which is formed among the member of same companies.

The representative example of “open and universal relationship” is civic group. It does not require some given or strict conditions to become its members. If someone agrees to its activities and thoughts and follows a series of regulation of the group, they can become the members. Being the member of the group is not privileged nor exclusive.

B. Analysis on Korean Social Relationships

There are two researches which investigated Korea’s social capital in 2006 and 2015. They surveyed Korean people of how much they are participatory in various social group activities such as alumni meeting, club activities, etc. The research institutions are KDI as of 2006 and Statistics Korea as of 2015.

First, KDI implemented comprehensive survey of Korean social capital in 2006. It researched the participation rate for various group activities which can be categorized as following; private group, interest group, civic group, political party and nepotism network.

According to this categorization, there is distinct difference in the participation rate of each group activity; nepotism network recorded the highest participation rate (31.6%), and the second greatest is reached by private group (25.75%) followed by interest group (7.24%), political party (3.9%), and civic group (3.7%).

[Table 3] Participation Rate of Various Social Groups (As of 2006)

(Unit: %)

Group	Kinds of social groups	Participation rate	Average
Private network	Sports, outdoor leisure club activities	24.6	25.75
	Cultural activities, sharing hobby club activities	22.9	
	Religious group	26.7	
	Cyber community	28.8	
Interest group	Labor union	5.9	7.24
	Enterpriser, merchant, farmer, and professional group	7.5	
	Education, Teacher, School parent group	8.1	
	Resident group of apartment	11.8	
	retired soldiers group	2.9	
Civic group	Consumer group	2.6	3.7
	International aid, human rights group	3.7	
	Environmental and animal protection group	2.3	
	Voluntary group for youth, retiree, senior citizens, and women	4.5	
	Voluntary group for saving the poverty	5.4	
Political party	Political party	3.9	3.9
Nepotism network	Alumni gathering of school	52.7	31.6
	Alumni gathering of native place	18.5	
	Clan gatherings	23.7	

(Source: Ministry of Strategy and Finance, 2006)

This result indicates that Korean actively participate in nepotism network and private group while they are not so participatory in civic group, political party and interest group activities. In order to see the change along with time series, this research looks into the data published in 2015.

According to Korean Statistical Information Service (2015), it was surveyed that the participation rate for alumni of school and native place records the highest participation rate among various social groups. It reaches 31.3% which is much greater than the participation rate for other groups such as private groups (18.9%), civic group (6.3%), interest group (3%), and political party (1.6%). The result is very similar in that both survey results show that participation rate for nepotism network is the highest, followed by private group among various social group activities.

[Table 4] Participation Rate of Various Social Groups (As of 2015)

(Unit: %)

Group	Kinds of social groups	Have Membership but not participate	Participation rate	Group Average
Political party	Political party	3.6	1.6	1.6

Nepotism network	Alumni gathering of school and native place	14.9	31.3	31.3
Interest group	Enterprisers, labor union, professional groups	4.7	3	3
Private network	Religious group	8.1	17.7	18.85
	Club activities	7.4	20	
Civic group	Civic movement group	2.4	2.2	6.3
	Civic societal group	6.3	7.8	
	Voluntary work and donation group	4.6	11.9	
	Social market economy group	3.1	3.3	

(Source: Korean Statistical Information Service)

As indicated earlier, the participation rate for nepotism network is the highest recording around 31% in two surveys, although the investigation periods have around 10 years of gap. Another distinctive result is the low participation rate for public associations such as civic groups and political party, which record 3~6% in case of civic groups and 1~4% in political party. This indicates that Korean are not so participatory in civic group activities for social common goals.

5. Power-Related Corruption and Nepotism

A. Why Power-Related Corruption?

Transparency International, a representative corruption research institute, reports that Korea's corruption perception index scored 57 as of 2018 (Transparency International, 2018). The number did increase since 2015, but Korea is still in the middle-high bracket at 45th place out of around 130 countries. Among the OECD countries, South Korea ranks 30th out of 36 countries.

[Table 5] Corruption Perception Index of OECD countries (As of 2018)

Rank 2018	Country	CPI Score 2018
1	Denmark	88
2	New Zealand	87
3	Finland	85
3	Sweden	85
3	Switzerland	85
7	Norway	84
8	Netherlands	82
9	Canada	81
9	Luxembourg	81
11	Germany	80
11	United Kingdom	80
13	Australia	77
14	Austria	76
14	Iceland	76
17	Belgium	75
18	Estonia	73
18	Ireland	73
18	Japan	73
21	France	72
22	United States of America	71
27	Chile	67
30	Portugal	64
34	Israel	61
36	Poland	60
36	Slovenia	60
38	Czech Republic	59
41	Latvia	58

41	Spain	58
45	Korea, South	57
53	Italy	52
57	Slovakia	50
64	Hungary	46
67	Greece	45
78	Turkey	41
138	Mexico	28

(Source: Transparency International)

There are two types of corruption in modern bureaucratic society: *a. power-related corruption*, *b. living related corruption*. Power-related corruption is when senior officials or politicians are involved, which can have major impact on the society. Living related corruption is conducted by street-level bureaucrats. This misdeed is carried out on a relatively smaller scale, but is generally widespread in both central and district administrations.

In this study, power-related corruption is mainly discussed, because it is one of the most critical social problems that impede the accumulation of social capital as well as it negatively contributes to societal learning effect of corruption. Although there are dozens of factors of corruption, nepotism is one of the key cultural reasons for corruption. According to Kim (1990), the causes of corruption are divided into three: *a. personal characteristics b. social and cultural factors (group consciousness, loyalty, sense of gratitude) c. institutional and managerial factors (absence of legal system and law enforcements)*. Nepotism is viewed as a cause of corruption in social and cultural aspects of the Korean society.

Corruption occurs when people, rather than reasonable and objective standards, make decisions solely based on personal connections and distort the efficient allocation of resources. It is vital to analyze the relationship between corruption and authority. During the last three decades, total of 182 corruption cases in Korea have been reported by the Korean

media. According to Cha (2017), public and private sector relationships most frequently hosted corruption. High social status and corruption rate also showed a positive correlation.

[Table 6] The Rate of Hosted Corruption and the Social Status Involved

(Unit: number of accidents)

Hosted corruption			Social status involved		
Public sector	Private sector	Public and private sector	High rank	Middle rank	Low rank
49 (26.9%)	52 (28.6%)	75 (41.2%)	153 (44.3%)	117 (33.9%)	75 (21.7%)

(Source: Cha, 2017)

Again, power-related corruption usually takes place between business men, senior civil servants and first-line government officials. Business men initiate the relationship by bribing senior civil servants to order street-level bureaucrats so that they may exercise greater influence in their business field.

B. Korea's Type of Corruption: Elite Cartels

According to Johnston, there are four types of corruption: *a. autocracy*, *b. clan*, *c. elite cartel*, *d. market lobby* (KBS, 2017). Johnston argues that first two types of corruption

are mostly observed in under-developed countries. In contrast, the latter two are mainly found in developed countries such as Korea. More specifically, elite cartels are the main conductors of corruption in Korea. This type of corruption is when ruler castes such as politicians, senior civil servants, and conglomerates form an exclusive and nepotism network to monopolize power and authority to gain unlawful benefits. The corruption by the elite cartels nests in governments when various institutional failures such as bulky governments, unproductive parliaments, dysfunctional courts and political party system are present. Nepotism is used as a tool of connection to fortify such exclusive network.

[Table 7] Four types of corruption

Type of corruption	Autocracy	Clan	Elite cartel	Market lobby
Countries	China, Indonesia	Russia, Philippines	South Korea, Italy	The United States, England, Japan, Canada

(Source: KBS, 2017⁵)

C. Analysis on Korea's Power-Related Corruption Cases

In this chapter, most representative power-related corruption cases regarding to nepotism will be discussed. This research seeks to conduct two case studies in order to

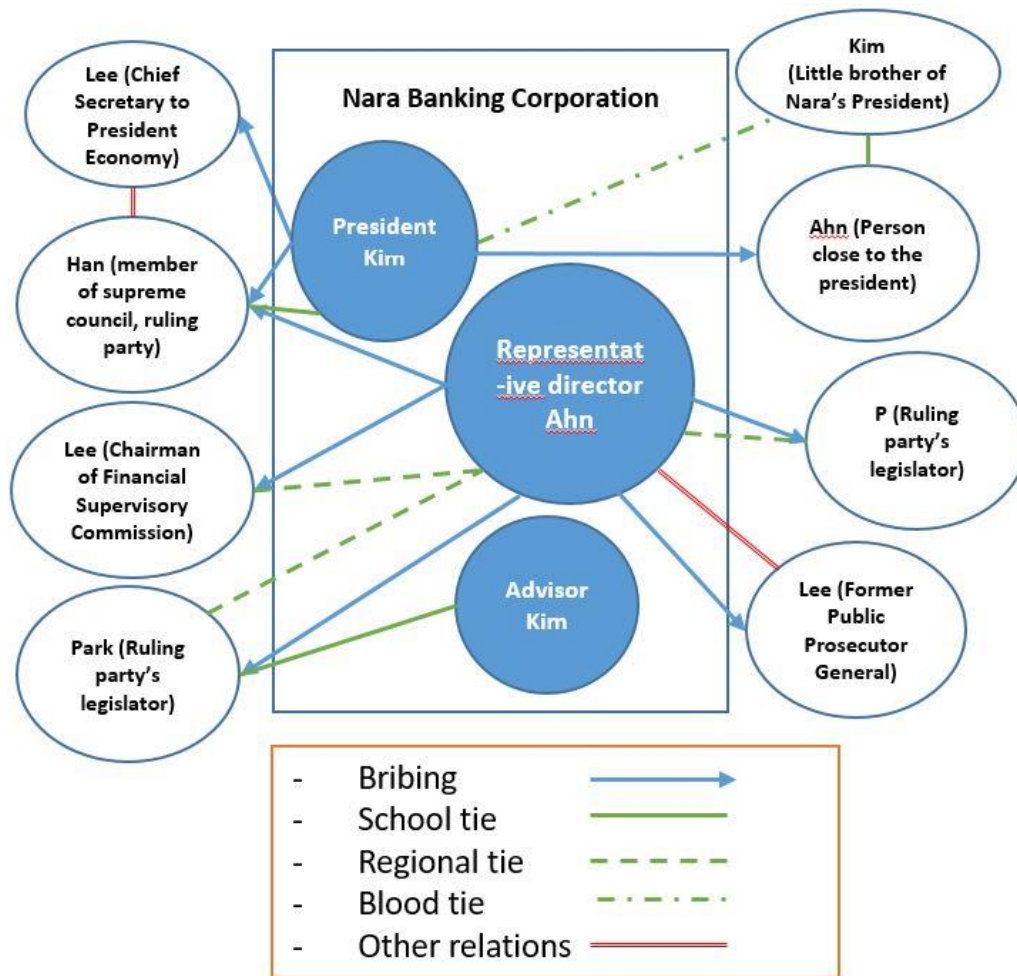
⁵ The original source: Michael Johnston. (2005). Syndromes of Corruption.

analyze the effect and the magnitude nepotism had in power-related corruptions.

i. Case 1: Nara Banking Corporation's Illegal Lobby Incident

Nara Banking Corporation was established in 1982 and was ordered to suspend their business in the year 2000 by the Financial Supervisory Commission. However, it was discovered that the president of Nara Banking Corporation tried to breakthrough his corporate bankruptcy by bribing political circles and scouting Mr. Ahn who had broad connections in the Jeolla-do as a representative director. The president of the institute provided 3 billion Korean won to Mr. Ahn, money needed for lobbying politicians and other interest groups. He sought to utilize all political ties to “persuade” Financial Supervisory Commission not to make decision of Nara Banking Corporation’s liquidation. Personnel who were involved in the bribery ranged from Chief Presidential Secretary of the National Assembly, chairperson of Financial Supervisory Commission, and more. Their shared connections were school ties, blood ties, and regionalism.

[Picture 3] Network of Nara Banking Corporation's Illegal Lobby Incident

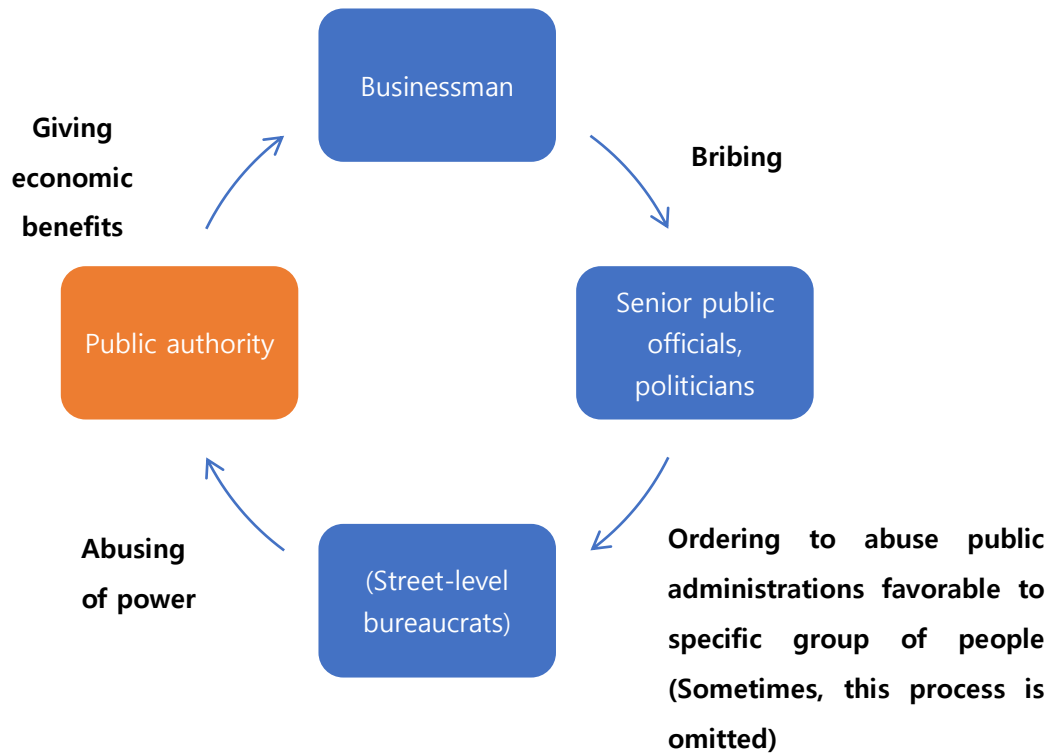


*Source: Kim et al(2006)

This specific case hints that nepotism may act as a catalyst for power-related corruptions. People charged with corruption were mostly sentenced with probation. Congressmen and major politicians faced relatively lighter punishment compared to other public officials (Kim et al, 2006b). This suggests that there is a room for improving fairness of judgement and punishment in the judicial system so that general population trust the

justice of the society.

[Picture 4] Cycle of Power-Related Corruption



ii. Case 2: Presidential Election Bribery Incident

In 2002, during the 16th presidential election, presidential candidate Lee's campaign was charged with bribery of around 82.3 billion Korean won from Korea's major conglomerates. One of the campaign executive, who was responsible judicial affairs, was Lee's high school and university alumni. He played a critical role in the bribery by personally delivering truck full of money to Lee. It was revealed that corporate giants such as Samsung,

Hyundai, LG, and SK all offered more than 10 billion Korean Won to Lee, respectively.

However, again, the head of conglomerates faced light punishment as the court was supposedly concerned with “the social cost and negative impact their imprisonment will have on the economy”.

iii. Nepotism in Elite Cartel

Power-related corruption as abuse of nepotism is not an old story. Recently, illegal employment request of high-ranking officials was a controversial topic of the political circles. One of the cases is “Kang-won land” incident. The company is entertaining public enterprise under the influence of Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. It runs Casino as well as other leisure facilities. Kang-won land was established in 1998 to recover the economy of closed mine area in Kang-won-do which underwent economic recession as the coal industry stagnated. The company was expected to boost the economy by employing the local talent. However, it was revealed that ALL of the applicants, around 500 people who passed the entrance examination in 2012 and 2013, requested special consideration for a job position through connections before they were accepted.

Especially, the number of the applicants who requested special consideration in the name of the president of Kang-won land reached 267. It was suspected that congressmen and power organizations were implicated in the crime. The vice-president of the company, who exerted influence on the dishonest acceptance of 30 applicants, confessed that he was requested by regional important figures in the prosecutorial investigation. Even though the connection among the people directly involved was not clearly revealed, there can be a

certain connection among them based on nepotism.

As discussed earlier, it is certain that nepotism has great influence on important decision makings; and if shown at a senior government level, for example appointing high ranking public officials. To pinpoint the effect of nepotism on the tip of the social pyramid, Jang (2014) used “Joins”, a biographic intelligence database of “big players” in both public and private sector as a reference. According to Jang (2014), a person in legal profession with the most school ties among the elite group had in total of 1,758 alumni from among 31,800 figures in the database. This figure only counts the people who attended and graduated school within a close time frame.

In addition, “The economist” reported in 2008 that Former President Lee Myung Bak had shallow political ground. The article suggested that in a pun on the name of a famous actress, South Korean call it “Ko So Young”. “Ko” refers to his alma mater, Korea University, which has supplied him with prospective ministers and aides (The Economist, 2008). Jang (2014) also suggests, elites born in 1950s made network based on school ties - privileged middle and high schools - since their teenage. The elites born in the 1960s seemed to divert from the traditional secondary education networks due to education equalization policy, but ultimately regressed back to sending their children to Ivy leagues or special-purpose high schools to partake in school ties. Also, another big cluster of networks are matrimonial connections. Out of 31,800 registered personnel, 1,380 were part of a large family.

D. Relationship between Power-Related Corruption and Social Capital

There are several researches that studied the relationships between institutional trust and social capital. This chapter analyzes how power-related corruption deteriorates social capital and how corruption reduces the level of institutional trust.

According to Bo & Dietlind (2008), people tend to categorize institutional trust into separate brackets. The aggregate level of generalized trust is more affected by the conducts of order institutions compared to their elected counterparts. Order institutions indicate the judicial system and the police which are the symbols for impartiality and fairness. When people feel discriminated or feel as they receive unfair treatment from these institutions, the overall trust decreases. In this sense, recovery of trust in judicial system and police is significant to accumulate social capital in Korea.

Moreover, according to Kenneth Newton and Pippa Norris (1999), there is strong correlation between social trust and public confidence in the institutions. He suggests that social trust can decrease when the public confidence in institutions falter due to unsatisfactory governmental performance. For this reason, Korea's senior civil servants involved in power-related corruption negatively impact social trust.

Low social capital is going to likely cause people to exercise negative nepotism behaviors. Thus, tailored institutional reform must be realized in order to eliminate power-related corruptions. There are some referential cases such as Singapore and Hong Kong where strict and transparent regulations against corruption do exist and "nobles oblige" is more often observed.

6. Conclusion

A. Conclusion

There is a controversy whether nepotism stems from Confucianism or not regarding the origin of nepotism. However, the reason why nepotism has lasted after the industrialization of Korean society is related to the fact that public institutions have not been trustworthy and the society has not been successfully transformed to a modernized nation, going through Japanese colonization, Korean War, and government-led rapid economic development. The public did not have a choice but to rely on nepotism network as a survival strategy. In reality, Korean social trust toward major social organizations as well as other people except for intimate group such as family is now at a low level.

Nepotism, a traditional value of Korean society, is still found in social relationships and power-related corruption in the contemporary Korean society. Participation rate for nepotism network such as alumni gathering or family unions are much higher compared to other networks in the survey of both 2006 and 2015. The participation rate for nepotism network reached 31% for each year. Furthermore, gap of participation rate between nepotism network and activities for public good indicates the fact that Korea's civic society has not fully matured. Also, nepotism acts as a connection through which the ruling castes can be linked. In order to overcome the corruption brought by nepotism, it is vital to introduce policy regulations to prevent corruptions, because it is studied that losing confidence in government or court, which has huge impact to the public, leads to weakening social capital of overall society. Singapore or Hong Kong, city states with similar cultural backgrounds to

Korea, would be ideal examples to refer to.

Some defines Korea as a prismatic society where social value system are in the process of divergence. This argument is quite persuasive, because the way of thinking and pattern of behaviors seem to be changing as technological development is intensified. For instance, untact network is getting prevalent as online-based communities are increased. Meetings and group activities become more easily disassembled and gathered than before. People do not define their realm of social activities within the nepotism network.

Nevertheless, societal ruling groups such as high-ranking officials and head of conglomerates have still shown nepotism-based pattern of behaviors in their public position. This damages to overall society when they are distorted to power-related corruption. Nepotism is a factor that incurs corruption. Particularly, nepotism serves as a bridge that pulls people into groups based on certain attributes of collective interest, major factors being regionalism, school ties, and blood ties. Such hazardous connections can become a catalyst for corruption in both individual and institutional levels. Therefore, it is vital to improve the law system and institutions to prevent corruptions and build up justice, which leads to progress of social capital.

Consequently, the modernization theory which suggests economic development leads to overall societal change, does not fully explain Korean case of modernization. It is more accurate to state that Korea has undergone its unique development path paved by its own historical and cultural backgrounds. Korea did find economic success by adopting the western model, however strong sense of nepotism still remains inseparable part of the Korean society.

B. Limitations

The lack of in-sight information on private network of social relationships and corruptions pose as a challenge. As private interaction between actors and groups are not always available to the public, key information needed for isolating the fundamental cause might be limited. This research too, mostly references to news articles and previous research open to the public eye, therefore further research on how respective nepotism network operated is required.

Moreover, it must be taken into account that, tapping into the private realm of human relationships has its share of fundamental limitations because it is personal domain. Thus, solely analyzing the social relationships in order to understand the widespread of nepotism in the Korean society is insufficient. Likewise, a few identical limitations on measuring nepotism behaviors should be recognized when citing this paper. First, properly measuring the exclusive solidarity of alumni (university or above level) within a company poses as a challenge. Also, since the complexity and connectivity of a social network are getting deepened, it is difficult to appropriately categorize the social network. For example, sorting out club activities organized by alumni based on nepotism from the social group distribution needs further research. Therefore, it is difficult to understand how much dominant nepotism is in the Korean society by looking into participation rate for various kinds of social group activities.

A limitation of survey for 2015 is that it does not inquire how much active people are for the cyber communities. Considering online based communication and group activities are getting increased, the survey is bounded to see the picture of social relationships. Still, it is

researched that nepotism is valid in the Korean society. According to Lee (2005), the solidity and weight nepotism in Korea carry compared to other East-Asian societies under Confucianism is far more beneficial. Also, Jang (2008) explains that traditional network based on nepotism has been reproduced and persistent in Korea which already achieved modernization.

C. Suggestions for Further Research

For the further research, there are some suggestions. First, it is critical to have data on online activities of people in order to see social relationships more accurately, because people tend to be more active online than before. And this trend is getting intensified. For example, it is needed to do survey of which group is the most frequently connected by Social Network Service(SNS) such as Facebook and Instagram, Blogs, and club activities online. Not only that, chat rooms on mobile phone such as “kakaotalk”, “wechat” and “whatsapp” are also places where people most frequently communicate with others. These online platforms are places where people form network ordinary connections as well as the people sharing similar concerns.

Also, there is another way to understand people’s social relationships when people’s network becomes online-basis. It is useful to investigate how much money people spend or contribute to each group for meetings or common purposes, because people gather money in order to organize regular meetings or activities and celebrations of the members, etc. It is reasonable to guess that people participate more or put a premium on some group activities where they spend more money.

Second, it is crucial to figure out the principle of forming “exclusive network” in elite cartel in current society, because the connections get more complicated and diversified. As the social class of Korean society gets solidified, and more ultimately the society becomes diversified, the connections in elite cartel are not just categorized by nepotism network.

Last but not least, it is significant to look into the reason why nepotism has been continued and solidified during the modernization. It has rarely been studied comprehensively to find the characteristics of Korea’s governance or institutional inertia which made a room for nepotism to work, distorting the allocation of public resources and weakening the public confidence in institutions and authority. In other words, research on the social systemic factors of Korea’s modernization periods that weakened social capital of the society should be undertaken.

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